

1.95  
L11W

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Security Administration  
Washington, D. C.

Working and Living Conditions  
of Migratory Farm Laborers  
in New Jersey  
During the Summer of 1940

Prepared by  
J. J. Kaufman  
Labor Division, FSA

U.S.D.A.  
FSA

January 1942

OCT 4 1944







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Farm Security Administration

Washington

To: N. Gregory Silvermaster, Director, Labor Division  
From: J. J. Kaufman, Statistician  
Subject: Report on Working and Living Conditions of Migrant  
Farm Laborers in New Jersey During the Summer of 1940

Herewith is submitted a report on the above subject. It supplements the findings and conclusions reported by this Division following a field survey in Central New Jersey in August of 1940 when over 300 potato workers were interviewed. The early report, titled "Migratory Farm Labor in New Jersey", prepared by Mr. S. Liss in February 1941, presented an over-all picture providing the background and orientation of the migrant farm labor situation in New Jersey. That report indicated the two major geographical areas in the state to which migratory farm workers were attracted, estimated numerical strength of this labor force in each of these areas, factors governing its employment, etc. No quantitative analysis was presented on wage rates, earnings, occupational background, size of families, condition of housing and other statistical data on working and living conditions of the migrants found to be employed in the state during the summer of 1940.

This report analyzes and summarizes such statistical material collected by the field enumerators and reported on farm wage workers' schedules used in the conduct of the survey. The findings are presented in two parts: Part One discusses the "Patterns and Conditions of Employment"; Part Two describes the "Characteristics of the Migratory Workers".



## C O N T E N T S

	Page
Introduction	1
Part One - Patterns and Conditions of Employment	
A Work Pattern	3
B Employment	4
C Number of jobs	5
D Methods of obtaining jobs	7
E Income	7
F Child employment	8
G Housing	14
H Health	17
Part Two - Characteristics of the Migratory Workers	
A Size of families	20
B Source of migrants	22
C Number of moves	23
D Years of migration	27
E Previous economic status	28
F Age	29
G Education	30



## Introduction

In order to ascertain the social and economic conditions of farm migrants known to be employed in appreciable numbers in the potato-growing region of central New Jersey, the Labor Division of the Farm Security Administration conducted an enumerative field survey in August 1940, the height of the season. Forty-four farm operators and 311 heads of families or single persons in Mercer, Monmouth and Middlesex counties were interviewed and responses recorded on schedules. The operators who were interviewed had in cultivation a total of 7100 acres, 65 per cent of which was devoted to potatoes--the latter representing about 15 per cent of the potato acreage in the Central Jersey area. These 44 farmers employed a total of 810 potato pickers, about 95 per cent of whom were migrants, practically all Negroes from out of the state.

The major portion of this report is devoted to findings in this area of New Jersey. In addition, however, the FSA made a similar study of migratory farm workers in Burlington county, in the south-central part of the State, where the type of agriculture and the character of the migrants differed from those of Central Jersey. In this area about 220 migrants were interviewed. These migrants were, for the most part, persons of Italian descent who resided in Philadelphia, Camden, Trenton and other nearby cities and towns and who for many years had been recruited for summer work in New Jersey agriculture.

The objectives of the studies were to ascertain: a) areas of major concentrations of migratory farm workers; b) estimates of the



volume and composition of this labor in these areas; c) factors governing its employment; d) rates of pay, earnings, and conditions of work associated with their employment, particularly housing conditions; e) source of origin of migrants; and f) methods of recruiting them.

An earlier report titled "Migratory Farm Labor in New Jersey", issued February 1941, covered the background of the migrant farm labor situation in this state. Some of the topics discussed in that report were as follows: "Major Areas of Agricultural Migration and Types of Migrants"; "Emergence of the Migratory Farm Labor Problems"; "Economic Importance of Migratory Labor to New Jersey Agriculture"; "Factors Governing the Employment of Migratory Workers in the Central Jersey Potato Region"; "Farm Labor Contracting". This report is confined to an analysis and summary of the statistical data collected by the field enumerators and tabulated from the farm wage workers' schedules used in the conduct of the survey. It supplements, therefore, the earlier report.



## PART ONE - PATTERNS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

### A. Work Patterns

The work day of the migrants in New Jersey, particularly in the potato area in Central Jersey 1/, is highly irregular. In this area, picking is heaviest in the early morning and late afternoon and evening, with grading activity extending frequently into the late hours of the night. If weather and market conditions are favorable for digging and picking, operations usually begin at 4 A.M. or 5 A.M. and last until 10 A.M. or 11 A.M. During the late morning and early afternoon usually no work is performed because potatoes are subject to scorch from the sun. Work usually resumes at 4 P.M. and continues until dark. Grading and hauling are performed at any time during the day or night, depending on the amount of potatoes which have been picked and are ready to be graded, sacked and hauled. No potatoes are dug, picked, or graded, however, irrespective of weather conditions, until they are sold.

When the price of potatoes takes a jump or orders are placed, the operator acts quickly to take advantage of the market, digging commences at short notice and becomes intense, and the product is rushed for delivery to meet buyers' or brokers' orders. Thus, a potato grower may receive an order at, say, 2 P.M. on a given day for delivery to a buyer or broker that same evening. This usually entails late afternoon digging, picking, and grading. Likewise, a late afternoon order may result in a late evening digging, and the potatoes are picked early the next morning. When the price is low and the market is sluggish, harvesting may be slowed up or discontinued completely and indefinitely.

---

1/ Parts of Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth Counties.



Negro migrants accept these conditions of employment. They work at high speed or stand by, as market and weather conditions determine, accepting the work or inactivity with little or no complaint. Frequently buyers' trucks call at the farm in the late hours of the night or early hours of the morning to pick up sacked potatoes. The Negro migrant, sleeping on the premises, is readily available to pitch in with the loading. In the eyes of the farm operator, the Negro migrant is the most accommodating of workers, and his immediate availability is a tremendous advantage which cannot be achieved with local workers who usually do not reside on the farm. One operator, referring to the migrants, summarized this favoring circumstance as follows: "You've got 'em right on your place; you don't have to go runnin' and lookin' for help."

B. Employment

The degree to which the migrants wait around for work while in the employ of the farm operators is clearly shown by the data collected. In Central Jersey, the migrants had been employed on the average only eight days out of the 22 working days<sup>1/</sup> they were in the area at the time of the interview. A similar situation existed in Burlington County, though to a lesser extent, where the migrants were employed 22 out of the 32 working days. <sup>1/</sup>

---

<sup>1/</sup> This excludes Sundays and holidays.



In Table I there is shown the number of days the heads of families and single persons were employed during the year preceding the survey. The migrants interviewed in the Hightstown or the Central Jersey potato region reported that, on the average  $\frac{1}{2}$ , they were employed 184 days. This is considerably more than the average for the migrants in Burlington County--110 days. Thus, the migrants were employed 60 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively, out of the 300 working days in the year. Three out of seven migrants in Burlington County, as against one out of seven in the Hightstown area, had worked 100 days or less during the year.

C. Number of Jobs

The jobs of the Central Jersey migrants were apparently of shorter duration than the jobs of the migrants in the Burlington County area. The former group held an average of about **five** jobs, of which four were agricultural and one non-agricultural, during the year, whereas the latter group held about two jobs. This rapid turn-over of jobs for the Negro migrants in Central Jersey, translated in terms of dollars and cents, means reduced earnings because of time lost, not only from traveling from one area to another but also in search of jobs after arriving in a particular area. In addition, there are costs of transportation which eat into the already meager earnings of the migrants.

---

1/ The term "average" as used in this report represents the median, unless otherwise stated.



TABLE I - NUMBER OF DAYS MIGRANTS WERE EMPLOYED DURING THE YEAR  
1939-40 <sup>1/</sup>

Number of Days Employed	Hightstown Area <sup>2/</sup>		Burlington County	
	Number of Migrants	Per Cent	Number of Migrants	Per Cent
1 to 25	5	1.6	22	10.1
26 to 50	9	2.9	17	7.8
51 to 75	9	2.9	29	13.2
76 to 100	24	7.7	27	12.3
100 to 125	32	10.3	36	16.4
126 to 150	31	10.0	12	5.5
151 to 175	33	10.6	11	5.0
176 to 200	43	13.8	7	3.2
201 to 225	46	14.8	1	0.5
226 to 250	42	13.5	9	4.1
251 and over	37	11.9	48	21.9
All reported cases	311	100.0	219	100.0
Not reported	--	--	1	--
Total	311		220	

<sup>1/</sup> The year preceding the date of the survey, which was made in August 1940. Data are for the family heads only.

<sup>2/</sup> Parts of Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth Counties.



#### D. Methods of Obtaining Jobs

The search for jobs by most of the Central Jersey migrants is frequently aimless, contrary to the general experience of the Burlington County migrants. About 40 per cent of the Negro potato workers reported that they had obtained jobs in the Hightstown area either because they had worked in the area before and expected to secure jobs again, because they had simply heard that jobs were available in the area, because of chance meetings with farmers and friends, or through the suggestions of a labor contractor. Sixty per cent of the migrants reported that they came to the area because they had a general promise of jobs. However, there was no certainty that jobs would be available.

The migrants in Burlington County reported an entirely different situation. Over 70 per cent stated that they had obtained jobs through previous arrangements with farmers or through the efforts of labor contractors who, because of previous contacts with farmers, are able to practically guarantee them work upon arrival.

#### E. Income

The casualness of employment of migrant workers results in their being among the lowest income groups in the country. The migrant workers in New Jersey are no exception. The average annual income for families, as distinguished from single and unattached persons, was \$475 in Central Jersey. This is based on an average family of two persons. The typical four-person migrant farm labor family in Burlington County had



an average annual income of about \$800. The average income for single migrants was \$380 in Central Jersey and \$367 in Burlington County. The average incomes include the value of perquisites and monies received from relief. Excluding relief, the average incomes were \$372 and \$314, respectively. Tables II through V show the distribution of incomes of families and single persons in the two areas.

About 20 per cent of the migrants in Central Jersey reported that they had received an average of \$25 relief during the preceding year, while 33 per cent of the Burlington County migrants received an average of \$290 relief during the year. The reason for the larger number of recipients, as well as the larger amount of relief, for the Italian migrants is probably due to the fact that most of these workers are part-time migrants who maintain permanent residences in nearby cities and thereby find it less difficult to obtain relief. The Negro migrants in Central Jersey are full-time migrants in the sense that they move from one area to another during the entire year, and the usual residence requirements for relief are difficult to meet.

#### F. Child Employment

One of the main factors contributing to the higher income of the migrant families in Burlington County is the employment of children in this area, a condition which does not exist to any appreciable extent among the migrants in the Central Jersey potato area. Of the 753 persons covered by the FSI survey in Burlington County, 73 per cent contributed to the gross earnings of the family. Of these 546 workers, slightly more than one-fourth were under 16 years of age.



TABLE II - TOTAL INCOME, INCLUDING RELIEF, OF MIGRANTS

Income Class (dollars)	Highstown Area			Burlington County		
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
	of fami-	of	of	of fami-	of	of
	lies and single persons	families	single persons	lies and single persons	families	single persons
100 or less	4		4	7	3	4
101 to 200	28	5	23	11	3	8
201 to 300	56	16	40	18	7	11
301 to 400	59	11	48	19	10	9
401 to 500	58	21	37	15	8	7
501 to 600	34	15	19	15	14	1
601 to 800	40	17	23	38	33	5
801 to 1000	12	2	10	27	23	4
1001 to 1500	9	4	5	37	34	3
1501 to 2000	3	2	1	20	16	4
2001 and over	4	2	2	7	5	2
all reported cases	307	95	212	214	156	58
not reported	4	3	1	6	4	2
Total	311	98	213	220	160	60



TABLE III - PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE ANNUAL INCOME, INCLUDING RELIEF, OF MIGRANTS

Income Class (dollars)	Hightstown Area			Burlington County		
	All	families	and	All	families	and
	single	Families	Single	single	Families	Single
	persons	persons	persons	persons	persons	persons
100 or less	1.3	-	1.9	3.3	1.9	6.9
101 to 200	9.1	5.3	10.8	5.1	1.9	13.8
201 to 300	18.3	16.8	18.9	8.4	4.5	19.0
301 to 400	19.2	11.6	22.6	8.9	6.4	15.5
401 to 500	18.9	22.1	17.5	7.0	5.1	12.1
501 to 600	11.1	15.8	9.0	7.0	9.0	1.7
601 to 800	13.0	17.9	10.8	17.8	21.2	8.6
801 to 1000	3.9	2.1	4.7	12.6	14.7	6.9
1001 to 1500	2.9	4.2	2.4	17.3	21.8	5.2
1501 to 2000	1.0	2.1	0.5	9.3	10.3	6.9
2001 and over	1.3	2.1	0.9	3.3	3.2	3.4
all reported cases	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0



TABLE IV - TOTAL INCOME, EXCLUDING RELIEF, OF MIGRANTS

Income Class (dollars)	Hightstown Area			Burlington County		
	Number		Number	Number		Number
	of		of	of		of
	families	Number	of	families	Number	of
	and		single	and		single
	single	of	persons	single	of	persons
	persons	families	persons	persons	families	persons
100 or less	12	1	11	19	11	8
101 to 200	30	6	24	25	13	12
201 to 300	58	18	40	22	14	8
301 to 400	54	11	43	13	6	7
401 to 500	53	17	36	14	9	5
501 to 600	38	20	18	18	17	1
601 to 800	36	14	22	29	24	5
801 to 1000	12	2	10	20	17	3
1001 to 1500	9	4	5	28	25	3
1501 to 2000	3	2	1	19	15	4
2001 and over	4	2	2	7	5	2
all reported cases	309	97	212	214	156	58
not reported	2	1	1	6	4	2
Total	311	98	213	220	160	60



TABLE V - PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE ANNUAL INCOME,  
EXCLUDING RELIEF, OF MIGRANTS

Income Class (dollars)	Hightstown Area			Burlington County		
	All			All		
	families			families		
	and single persons	Families	Single persons	and single persons	Families	Single persons
100 or less	3.9	1.0	5.2	8.9	7.1	13.8
101 to 200	9.7	6.2	11.3	11.7	8.3	20.7
201 to 300	18.8	18.6	18.9	10.3	9.0	13.8
301 to 400	17.5	11.3	20.3	6.1	3.8	12.1
401 to 500	17.1	17.5	17.0	6.5	5.8	8.6
501 to 600	12.3	20.6	8.5	8.4	10.9	1.7
601 to 800	11.6	14.4	10.4	13.5	15.4	8.6
801 to 1000	3.9	2.1	4.7	9.3	10.9	5.2
1001 to 1500	2.9	4.1	2.3	13.1	16.0	5.2
1501 to 2000	1.0	2.1	0.5	8.9	9.6	6.9
2001 and over	1.3	2.1	0.9	3.3	3.2	3.4
all reported cases	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0



The problem of the employment of children brought about severe criticism on the part of many welfare groups who pointed out the harmful effects of child labor--particularly loss of education. As a result of their efforts, the Child Labor Law of New Jersey was revised in 1940, prohibiting employment of children under 16 years on the farms of New Jersey during the period when schools are in session, and regulating the employment of children between the ages of 12 to 15 years when school is not in session.

In 1941 farm operators in New Jersey failed in their attempt to revise the law so that children between the ages of 12 and 15 years may be employed during certain "emergencies." The proponents of this amendment contended that the law had not only decreased the supply of migrant child labor in South Jersey but has also reduced the supply of adult labor in the area. It was maintained that many parents found it "unprofitable" to migrate to Jersey if they were denied the earnings of their children. It has been found, however, that a majority of the parents leave their children at home so that they may complete their schooling. At a later date the children follow their parents to work in the harvest. In the same manner those parents who are concerned about their children's education remain in the South Jersey area for a month or so after their children have returned home for the school session in September.

Although the number of migrants in South Jersey decreased in the Summer of 1941, the main factor was not the Child Labor Law but rather the absorption in defense industries of many members of these



Italian farm families. It is reasonable to assume that there would have been a decrease in the labor supply even if the Child Labor Law of 1940 had not been on the statute books.

With a strict enforcement of the Child Labor Law, a continuation of defense activities, and the tendency for the number of Italian migrants to decrease over a period of years, it may become necessary for farmers in the area to turn to other sources for their labor supply. The farm operators will probably turn to southern Negro labor for their supply, similar to the Central Jersey operators. The increased use of this type of labor will probably create many problems of housing, health, and sanitation.

#### G. Housing

Housing accommodations for migratory workers both in Central Jersey and Burlington County were found to be far from satisfactory. In the latter region, however, some of the Italian families have insisted on better housing and their efforts have been partially successful.

In both areas, with few exceptions, the housing is provided rent-free by the farm operators. All the migrants in Burlington County reported that such was the case, while of all the migrants studied in Central Jersey only seven workers reported that they rented their housing accommodations and three reported that they owned their own homes.

The different types of housing provided by the farm operators in both areas are shown in Table VI. It will be noted that the most



TABLE VI - TYPE OF HOUSING OCCUPIED BY MIGRANTS INTERVIEWED <sup>1/</sup>

Type of Housing	Hightstown (Central Jersey) Area		Burlington County	
	Number of families and single persons	Per Cent	Number of families and single persons	Per Cent
House	33	10.6	72	32.7
Tent	5	1.6		
Rooming-house	2	0.6		
Barracks	17	5.5	57	25.9
Labor cabin on farm	41	13.2	79	35.9
Barn	90	28.9	1	0.5
Miscellaneous	123	39.6	11	5.0
Total	311	100.0	220	100.0

<sup>1/</sup> These data do not necessarily indicate the available number of shelters of various types, or their relative importance, since several of the families included above may have been occupying the same shelter.



common types in Burlington County are houses, labor cabins, and barracks. In the Hightstown area of Central Jersey the fact that the largest group of migrants is classified in the "miscellaneous" category is significant. This miscellaneous category includes wagon sheds, chicken coops, garages, warehouses, tool sheds, wagon houses, corn cribs, and other make-shift shelters. Very few farmers in Central Jersey have taken the initiative to construct special forms of housing--labor cabins, etc.--for their potato harvest hands. On the other hand, the Negro migrant is in a poor position to bargain about the type or conditions of the free shelter provided. The alternative, if one exists, is a room in a near-by town renting from \$1.50 to \$2.50 a week--a sum out of proportion to the migrant's ability to pay.

Overcrowding--that is, the extent to which large numbers of persons live and sleep in one room--is a serious problem in the Hightstown area where, on the average, five persons lived and slept in one room. This situation was not so serious in Burlington County where the average number in each room was two persons.

As far as sanitary facilities are concerned, they are either inconveniently located, poor and inadequate for the demands made upon them, or are totally absent. Although the law in New Jersey instructs each local Board of Health to enforce local regulations and the regulations of the State Sanitary Code, limited funds and shortage of personnel make enforcement very difficult.

Practically all of the farm operators in the Hightstown area stress the economic necessity for employing migratory labor but few



of them provide adequate housing and other essentials and conveniences of living for these indispensable workers. Seven out of eight farmers interviewed stated that they thought the facilities they provided were satisfactory. The opinion common among them is that the Negro migrant neither desires nor appreciates clean, comfortable and convenient living quarters. Furthermore, the Negro migrant cannot be trusted, they believe, to make proper use of improved housing facilities even if these were furnished. Several farmers pointed to their experience to substantiate these views, declaring that the improvements which they introduced in past years were negated after a season or two and "things were again in rack and ruin."

#### H. Health

The State Health Department of New Jersey has made serious efforts during the past year or two to control the health of the migrants in the potato region. In an examination of about 2,500 Negro migrants in 1939, the Health Department found that the health of the group as a whole was poor--at least as far as the prevalence of syphilis among them was a reflection of it. <sup>1/</sup> About one out of every four Negro migrants was found to have syphilis and one out of every three of these syphilitics, a diagnosis revealed, had the

---

<sup>1/</sup> Of the 3,021 persons who were blood tested, only 73 were white, the rest were Negroes. Of the 2,498 Negroes, only 390 were residents of New Jersey; the others came from 18 different states of which Florida, Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia were most frequently represented in this order.



disease <sup>1/</sup>in its infectious stages. Those that were afflicted with the disease were given treatment before they returned to their homes with patient referral forms indicating the exact nature of their ailment and the treatments given to date. Facilities that would be provided by an FSA camp in the region would be of inestimable worth to the State Health Department in enlarging the scope and advancing the thoroughness of its work in this direction.

The FSA, in its survey, attempted to determine the incidence of illness among the migrants. Although the data are limited, not only by the fact that the enumerators were not particularly qualified as far as determining the types of ailments, but also by the fact that the migrants' reports may not be fully complete, certain general statements can be made.

About 10 per cent of the men, women and children surveyed in Central Jersey reported that they had been disabled and had lost an average of four days of work during the two months preceding the survey. Slightly more than one-half of those disabled visited a doctor for treatment, the others applying home remedies. The reasons for not being treated for their ailments are many. Although many replied that they thought home remedies were sufficient or they did not think medical treatment was necessary, the extent to which inability to pay for such services was a factor is not known.

---

<sup>1/</sup> See statement by the New Jersey Conference of State Departments on Migratory Labor prepared for the House of Representatives Special Committee Investigating the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens, pursuant to H. Res. 63 and H. Res. 491 (New York City Hearings, July 29-31, 1940).



Of the 753 persons covered by the FSA survey in Burlington County, six per cent reported that they had been ill during the two months preceding the survey. On the average, these persons were disabled for about 20 days. About three-fourths were attended by a physician, the others applied home remedies.

In general, the health problem among the migrant workers in Burlington County is not very serious and in no way comparable to the problems which exist among the Negro migrants in other areas of New Jersey.

It should be kept in mind that the reported number of disabilities are probably low. The failure of the migrants to remember all their disabilities can be reliably assumed. Further, many migrants fail to recognize some of their ailments and continue working. Others often work despite illness because of economic necessity.

Basically, the health problem among migratory agricultural workers exists because of the low economic status in which they find themselves and because their mobile status makes health facilities unavailable to them.



## PART TWO - CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIGRATORY WORKERS

### A. Size of Families

The Central Jersey migrants are chiefly adult Negro males who, for the most part, are either single or unattached, having left their families at home. In contrast, the migrants in Burlington County are predominantly of the white race, the great majority of them being Italians or of Italian stock. These Italian migrants are accompanied, in a majority of the cases, by their wives and children who also work in the fields.

Table V shows that more than two-thirds of the migrants interviewed in the Hightstown area of Central Jersey were single or unattached persons. On the other hand, nearly three-fourths of those interviewed in Burlington County represented family groups.

The migrant families in Burlington County were relatively large in size, as seen from an examination of Table VII. The average size of these families in this area was slightly more than four persons. In Central Jersey, it was found that the size of the families was rather small, averaging about two persons.

TABLE VII - SIZE OF FAMILIES

Number of Persons per Household Group	Hightstown Area		Burlington County	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Single or unat- tached persons	213	68.5	60	27.3
Families:				
2	54	17.5	33	15.0
3	29	9.3	28	12.7
4	4	1.3	31	14.1
5	2	0.6	27	12.3
6	5	1.6	20	9.1
7	2	0.6	12	5.4
8	1	0.3	4	1.8
9	1	0.3	3	1.4
10 or more			2	0.9
All Families	98	31.5	160	72.9
Total	311	100.0	220	100.0



Table VIII shows a breakdown of the migrants according to race. It is clear that the Negroes are predominant in the Hightstown area and whites are typical in Burlington County.

TABLE VIII - NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND SINGLE PERSONS, BY RACE

Area and Race	Number of Families and Single Persons	Number of Families	Number of Single Persons
Hightstown:			
White migrants	4		4
Negro migrants	307	98	209
Total	311	98	213
Burlington:			
White migrants	217	159	58
Negro migrants	3	1	2
Total	220	160	60

B.- Source of Migrants

The Negro migrants in Central Jersey usually come from the States on the Eastern Seaboard south of New Jersey. The Italian migrants, in South Jersey, come, for the most part, from the Philadelphia-Camden metropolitan area.

About 90 per cent of the Central Jersey migrants who come from the deep South usually move up the Atlantic Seaboard following the potato crop as it matures along their routes. At least two-thirds of these potato pickers come from the States of Florida and

Virginia. It has been observed that comparatively small numbers continue their potato migration up to Long Island, New York, and even as far as Aroostook, Maine, shortly following the peak of the potato harvest in New Jersey. Not much is known, however, about this phase of their migration.

About 80 per cent of the Italian field workers in South Jersey come from the Philadelphia-Camden area, with an appreciable number from Trenton and some of the smaller New Jersey towns near the Delaware River. Chester, Pennsylvania and Newark, New Jersey, and even New York City, feed this area with seasonal agricultural wage workers.

There has been a tendency for the number of southern Negro migrants, particularly from Virginia, to increase in South Jersey. Although their number is still small it appears that the near future will find larger numbers of Negroes working in the South Jersey fields, similar to the type working in the Central Jersey potato fields.

#### C. Number of Moves

The migrants in Central Jersey, unlike those in Burlington County who come directly from their homes for the harvest and then return, move in frequent intervals from one state to another in search of work. In fact the Central Jersey migrants can be called full-time migrants whereas the South Jersey workers can be referred to as part-time migrants.



The full-time migrants interviewed in the Hightstown area reported that, on the average, they moved about four times during the year preceding the survey. Of these four moves, three were interstate—that is, in moving from one area to another States lines were crossed—and one was intrastate. The part-time migrants in Burlington County reported that, on the average, they moved only twice during the year; that is, once to the place of employment and then return to their homes. Tables IX and X show the number of moves made during the year by the families and single persons interviewed in the two areas.

The Italian migrants in Burlington County are not migrants in the same sense as are the farm-uprooted migratory workers of other areas, such as the migrants in the West who, for the most part, seek permanent relocation. These farm workers migrate because the urban areas, from which they come and where they reside, do not offer sufficient employment opportunities so that they can support themselves on a decent level. Although in the past the Italian workers looked upon seasonal agricultural work as "a summer in the country", probably reflecting their agricultural surroundings in their home country, many among the younger generation who are American born today consider work in the harvest as an economic necessity.

The Central Jersey Negro migrants, although they too have not been uprooted from the farm, reflect an entirely different situation. They are, for the most part, young laborers who have

TABLE IX - NUMBER OF MOVES MADE BY MIGRANTS

Number of Moves	Hightstown Area		Burlington County	
	Number of Families <u>1/</u>	Per Cent of Families	Number of Families <u>1/</u>	Per Cent of Families
1	21	6.8	61	27.7
2	42	13.5	117	53.2
3	51	16.4	27	12.3
4	56	18.0	7	3.2
5	60	19.3	4	1.8
6	52	16.7	4	1.8
7	11	3.5	-	-
8	15	4.8	-	-
9	2	0.7	-	-
10 or more-	1	0.3	-	-
Total	311	100.0	220	100.0

1/ Includes single persons as well as heads of families.



TABLE X - NUMBER OF INTERSTATE AND INTRASTATE MOVES  
MADE BY MIGRANTS

	Hightstown Area		Burlington County	
Number of Moves	Interstate	Intrastate	Interstate	Intrastate
None	3	137	36	165
1	34	100	50	29
2	69	42	107	24
3	62	24	18	-
4	76	6	4	1
5	43	1	3	-
6	19	1	2	1
7	3	-	-	-
8	2	-	-	-
9	-	-	-	-
10 or more	-	-	-	-
Total	311	311	220	220

adopted migratory farm work as a way of life because of the lack of other economic opportunities in the areas from which they originally come.

#### D. Years of Migration

The workers interviewed in Burlington County had been migrating, on the average, for about three years. More than one-third (36 per cent) had been migrating for five years or more, as shown in Table XI. The migrants interviewed in Central Jersey had been migrating, on the average, a shorter period of time--slightly more than two years. About 23 per cent of these workers had been migrating for five years or more. The proportion of first year migrants was larger in the Hightstown area than in the Burlington area.

TABLE XI - YEARS OF MIGRATION

	Hightstown Area			Burlington County		
Number of Years as Migrants	Number of Families	Per Cent of Families		Number of Families	Per Cent of Families	
5 years or more	70	22.5		80	36.4	
4 to 5	26	8.4		14	6.4	
3 to 4	28	9.0		18	8.2	
2 to 3	37	11.9		26	11.8	
1 to 2	34	10.9		30	13.6	
less than 1	116	37.3		52	23.6	
Total	311	100.0		220	100.0	

1/ Includes single persons as well as heads of families.



As is characteristic of all migrants, most of those in both areas of New Jersey plan eventually to settle down. For the Negro migrants it means a farm for their permanent location, whereas for the Italian workers it means a permanent job in the city. These migrants, however, have no definite plans, their intentions merely reflecting their hopes for a better economic status.

#### E. Previous Economic Status

The background of the migrants in the Central Jersey and Burlington County areas are similar only with respect to the fact that their agricultural background is, for the majority of the migrants, that of farm laborers. Table XII shows that very few of the migrants are displaced farmers. The chief difference between the two migrant groups is that the Italian migrants have held unskilled and semi-skilled industrial jobs, whereas the Negro migrants have had little, if any, experience in industry. Presumably the former group can be used in industry if jobs are available, whereas the latter group would require considerable training before being eligible for industrial work. Many Italian families reported some experience either as unskilled, semi-skilled, or domestic workers. Scattered numbers stated that they had been employed in construction work, machine work, and other semi-skilled work.

TABLE XII - PREVIOUS AGRICULTURAL STATUS OF HEADS OF FAMILIES  
AND SINGLE PERSONS

Previous Agricultural Experience 1/	Hightstown Area			Burlington County		
	Families and single persons	Heads of families	Single persons	Families and single persons	Heads of families	Single persons
Owner-operator	2	1	1	2	2	-
Hired manager	1	-	1	-	-	-
Tenant	9	6	3	1	-	1
Share cropper	15	7	8	-	-	-
Farm laborer	264	82	182	181	134	47
Non-farming	20	2	18	35	23	12
Not reported	-	-	-	1	1	-
Total	311	98	213	220	160	60

1/ Some migrants reported more than one type of previous agricultural experience. Such persons were included in the highest economic status reported.

#### F. Age

In Central Jersey, the persons interviewed were young, averaging about 30 years of age. The family heads in Burlington County were, on the other hand, relatively old. Their average age was about 50 years. The Central Jersey migrants, although having little experience either as farm operators or as workers in industry, are young enough to be trained and educated for such work. The Burlington County migrants, although much older, are trained to some extent in certain industrial occupations



and are capable of doing such work. More than one-half (57 per cent) of the Italian migrants interviewed were between the ages of 45 and 64, whereas the Negro migrants interviewed in Central Jersey reported only seven per cent in this age group.

As was expected the proportion of children, 14 years of age or less, in Burlington County was considerably larger than the proportion in the Central Jersey area—30 and 13 per cent, respectively.

Tables XIII and XIV show the age distribution of all the persons included in the survey in the two areas. There are two significant facts to be drawn from an examination of the data in the tables: first, the larger proportion of children in the Burlington County area; and, secondly, the larger proportion of older persons in that area.

#### G. Education

Since relatively few children are employed in or migrate into the potato area in Central Jersey, the educational problem affecting child workers does not exist to any large degree. Educational handicaps of adult workers in this area, however, are reflected in retardation of formal schooling. In Central Jersey, it was found that 83 per cent of the persons included in the survey worked when work was available and did not attend school during the year preceding the survey. Of those persons who were 16 years of age or over, the average grade completed was the fifth grade of elementary school. Thirteen per cent of these persons had some high school education. Only three per cent had a complete high school education.

TABLE XIII - AGE DISTRIBUTION OF ALL PERSONS

Age	Hightstown Area		Burlington County	
	Number of persons	Per Cent	Number of persons	Per Cent
Under 1 year	4	0.8	3	0.4
1 to 4 years	15	3.0	15	2.0
5 to 9 years	20	4.1	64	8.6
10 to 14 years	26	5.3	144	19.4
15 to 19 years	44	9.0	186	25.1
20 to 24 years	98	19.9	50	6.7
25 to 34 years	175	35.6	23	3.1
35 to 44 years	73	14.8	38	5.1
45 to 54 years	29	5.9	115	15.5
55 to 64 years	7	1.4	82	11.0
65 and over	1	0.2	23	3.1
	492	100.0	743	100.0
Not reported	3	-	10	-
Total	495	-	753	-



TABLE XIV - AGE DISTRIBUTION OF ALL PERSONS, BY SEX

Age	Hightstown Area		Burlington County	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Under 1 year	3	1	1	2
1 to 4	8	7	9	6
5 to 9	13	7	36	28
10 to 14	13	13	77	67
15 to 19	32	12	113	73
20 to 24	74	24	35	15
25 to 34	131	44	15	8
35 to 44	60	13	7	31
45 to 54	19	10	53	62
55 to 64	7	-	53	29
65 and over	1	-	17	6
Not reported	-	3	4	6
Total	361	134	420	333

The main educational problem among migrants was found in Burlington County and probably exists among the Italian migrants in the whole of South Jersey. The survey reveals that the educational attainment of the adult workers was extremely low, nearly one-half (45 per cent) of all persons 19 years of age or over either



had no schooling whatsoever or had never completed the first grade of elementary school. Also, the loss of schooling for the children was found to be considerable.

A previous survey conducted in 1938 revealed that almost 90 per cent of the children were absent from school during the early or later parts of the agricultural season. They were discovered to be missing, on the average, about 39 days or approximately two school months. 1/ The harmful effects of this loss of schooling has been the concern of various welfare and educational groups. Their struggle for the enactment of a law which would prohibit and regulate the employment of children on the farms in New Jersey finally resulted in the passage of a law in 1940 which revised the Child Labor Law of 1914. 2/ The revised law went into effect on September 1, 1940 with the following provisions affecting the employment of child labor in agriculture:

- a) Children under 16 years of age engaged in agricultural work shall not be employed when school is in session and that those under 12 years of age are prohibited from such employment at any time. 3/

---

1/ National Child Labor Committee, A Summer in the Country, Table VIII.

2/ This law restricted the employment of children under 16 years of age while school was in session. The courts ruled, however, that the law did not apply to non-resident children.

3/ No restrictions are placed on agricultural work performed by minors under 16 years of age outside of school hours if such work is done in connection with the minor's own home and directly for his or her parent or legal guardian.



- b) No minor under 16 may be employed without a special permit. 1/
- c) No minor under 16 years of age employed on a farm may work more than 10 hours a day.
- d) No minor under 16 years of age not a resident of the State of New Jersey shall be employed, permitted or suffered to work in any occupation or service whatsoever at any time during which the law of the State of his residence requires his attendance at school, or at any time during the hours when public schools in the district in which employment in such occupations or services may be available are in session.

The revised statute had been in operation only six months when the farmers launched a program to revise the law. As a result of this pressure the State Senate passed a bill in April 1941 which provided the following:

Upon written petition by any person or corporation engaged in agriculture or representing agricultural interests setting forth that an emergency exists in agriculture or any branch thereof, or engaged in the first processing of, or in canning or packing, perishable or seasonal fresh fruits or vegetables or any agricultural or horticultural commodities during seasonal operations in any part of this State, the cause of such emergency, whether general employment conditions or otherwise and that such emergency requires that in the public interest one or more requirements of the act to which this act is a supplement should be dispensed with or suspended during the period of such emergency, the Department of Labor shall immediately investigate and if such investigation discloses that an emergency exists and that such emergency requires

---

1/ Agricultural work permits are to be issued by designated school officials of the school district in which the child resides. In the case of non-resident children, permits are to be issued in the school districts in which they are employed. Parents of children who apply for such permits must present proof of minor's age and physical fitness, principal's statement that employment contemplated will not impair child's schooling, nature of work applied for and hours and wages of employment. In the interest of enforcement, permits are to be held in the custody of the employer during the period of employment and returned to minor at the expiration or termination of work.



that in the public interest one or more requirements of the act to which this act is a supplement should be dispensed with or suspended during the period of such emergency, the Commissioner of Labor may by special order limited to a described area and to a particular period of time, and limited to agriculture generally or a particular branch thereof, or engaged in the first processing of, or in canning or packing, perishable or seasonal fresh fruits or vegetables or any agricultural or horticultural commodities during seasonal operations, dispense with or suspend such requirement or requirements of the act to which this act is a supplement, as is set forth in such special order; provided, however, that no such special order shall dispense with or suspend the requirement that no minor under twelve years of age shall be employed or the requirement that no minor under sixteen years of age shall be engaged in agricultural pursuits for more than ten hours per day; provided, however, that no special order shall permit a minor between sixteen and eighteen years of age to be employed or engaged in the first processing of or in the canning or packing of seasonal fresh fruits or vegetables for more than ten hours per day.

This amendment, which in effect permitted the employment of minors between 12 and 15 years of age during school hours whether or not they are residents of New Jersey, never became law.



